

Extension history

Educator taught 4-H family successful family living

Extension was a part of our family since its inception in 1909, long before the Kastanek family joined 4-H in 1963, but my story is about 4-H. I was nine years old when Miss Corinne Nelson came out to a neighboring 4-H family's home and gave a demonstration on salads.

At that time I believed that the reason for the food demonstration was to show us how to put a scoop of cottage cheese on top of a leaf of lettuce, stick half a banana upright into it, and top it off with a maraschino cherry. I realize now that Miss Nelson was teaching so much more, such as how to teach others. To this day I use her model of demonstration every time I teach a co-worker a new computer technique. (What are we going to learn? Why? How? How does this skill apply to our job?)

Miss Nelson was also teaching nutrition and parenting skills. The "candle salad" showed up often on our dinner table. Even Dad ate it when I put it in front of him, although he hated cottage cheese and lettuce. He knew he was setting an example for good nutrition, building my self esteem, and encouraging my budding culinary talents.

Miss Nelson always sent us home in a state of excitement. We couldn't wait to try the new ideas she had presented. I would be so disappointed when she said, "But unfortunately we don't have time to try this idea today, so try it after you get home, and please, let me know how it works for you." Today I know that "try this at home" was another of her techniques that made her such an effective community educator.

Many of our family stories and scrapbook pages include references to the Extension educators who were so important to us. My brother and sister, my children, and the grandchildren of our family and friends tell stories of similar experiences of motivation, cooperation, building self esteem, and just plain having fun—the qualities of successful family living.

(Note: Miss Corinne Nelson was an Extension home agent in Morrison County for many years, and continued to volunteer for Extension until she passed away in 1996.)

Story submitted by Colleen Kastanek

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